

No

The effort by this administration to characterize the weekend demonstration as (a) small, (b) violent, and (c) treacherous will not succeed because it is demonstrably untrue. If citizens had had the opportunity to witness the weekend on television, they would know it to be untrue; as it is, they will have to ask those who were there—either kids or cops, no matter. For sheer balderdash it would be difficult to exceed Herbert G. Klein's estimate: "Had it not been for the highly effective work of the Washington police, of the National Guard . . . for the reserve forces of the Defense Department and the complete cooperation of all elements of the government . . . and the work of the Justice Department . . . the damage to Washington (Saturday night and the night before) would have been far greater than . . . the . . . riots after the death of Martin Luther King."

That statement is inaccurate on every count save the first—the enormously effective and professional performance of the Washington police department. Not necessarily in order of importance, thanks should be tendered to (a) the marchers, (b) the volunteer marshals, (c) the police and Chief Wilson, (d) the Mobe leaders, (e) Mayor Washington, and (f) the scores of organizations, churches and others, and individuals who went out of their way to exhibit what the mayor called "neighborliness."

What this administration, and the Attorney General in particular, does not seem capable of grasping is the simple truth that if the demonstrators had wanted serious violence they had the numbers to create it. Does anyone seriously believe that Washington's undermanned police force could contain 5,000 or 50,000 or 150,000 demonstrators bent on violence? The answer is No, and the demonstrators didn't want trouble. The fringe groups—Weatherman, crazies—did want trouble, and got it. To the Attorney General, this is evidence that the Mobe lost control and broke its nonviolent pledges. Is it reasonable to hold the Mobe leaders (and, by implication, all those thousands who marched) responsible for the actions of 50 or 200 or 500 people? No, it is not. The Mobe does not control Weatherman—and that is not an apology,

it is a fact. There is evidence now that Weatherman demanded \$20,000 from the Mobe as the price for peace; the Mobe refused, and the wild ones marched on the Saigon embassy. What there is now is a split between the antiwar moderates and the extremists; it is a serious split, but if John Mitchell tries hard enough he can probably heal it. He is one of the few men in the country who can.

"I do not believe that—over-all—the gathering here can be characterized as peaceful," was the way the Attorney General put it. He places in evidence the fact that at the "major confrontation" at Dupont Circle "20 persons were arrested." If the arrest of 20 people then, less than 300 people overall out of a crowd of a quarter of a million, constitutes a "major confrontation" engineered by the leaders of that crowd—then, what we may have here is a failure of communication.

These men—Mitchell, Klein and others who have had a hand in making policy in this matter—are not dumb or weak but small, men who somehow naturally see themselves as beleaguered adversaries. It seems clear from their statements, and from the accounts of participants at the command post in the Municipal Center over the weekend, that the Nixon administration was less interested in trying to keep the march peaceful than in trying to make it seem less large and more violent than it really was, and in trying to scare the daylighters out of that putative Silent Majority at the same time.

So yesterday, as is the fashion with this administration, we had the qualifying statement from the White House press secretary, Ron Ziegler. Yes, it was a pretty large crowd; yes, it was, when you think about it, fairly peaceful. More moderate, more generous, more truthful than the other statements—but there is no reason to think that what Ziegler says is what the President thinks. On Saturday and Sunday, the President by his own account was preoccupied with the football games. It was a fine afternoon for watching football, he is quoted as saying on Saturday, and for sheer piquancy, we have not heard the likes of that since Marie Antoinette.

THE NEW YORK TIMES

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 1969

In The Nation: Missing the Point of the Mobe

By TOM WICKER

WASHINGTON, Nov. 17—Attorney General Mitchell told the nation Sunday that the gathering of a quarter-million Americans in Washington to demonstrate against the war had not been peaceful enough. On another network, Herbert G. Klein, the Administration's director of communications, insisted that the majority of the people support the President, no matter how big the turnout was.

The facts are that:

—The kind of violence Mr. Mitchell and the Justice Department said in advance that they expected was never remotely in evidence. A magnificent performance by the Washington police and the Mobilization marshals, a jovial and generous spirit in the immense crowd, the nature of the occasion, perhaps even the clear but cold weather, kept the violence to a minimum. The incidents that did occur were clearly the work of fringe groups.

—Nobody ever claimed that the size of the turnout would be an accurate guide as to how many people do or do not support Mr. Nixon's Vietnam policies. It was a much bigger gathering than the Administration

wanted and it might well be asked whether Herb Klein or anybody else believes he could get 250,000 people together anywhere in this country to march in support of Richard Nixon and the present pace of his peacemaking. But the real point is simply that the Mobe showed once again that a huge and dynamic segment of the population wants that pace speeded up, and sharply.

The Hard Fact

That is the fact that confronts Mr. Mitchell and Mr. Klein after the Mobe. That is the fact that they tried to diminish on television. That is the fact that Mr. Nixon, behind the wall of parked buses that surrounded the White House, tried to ignore by tuning in the Purdue-Ohio State game (not that he could have found any of those unfair Eastern liberal networks televising perhaps the largest crowd ever seen in America, and certainly in Washington; where were they?).

But this hard fact will not go away. The protest movement is not a fringe group of violent extremists. It is not a small and unreasonable minority. It is a serious, sizable, sustained element of American politics

that, while it may or may not be a majority, certainly is not silent. It is active, growing, determined and here to stay.

Nevertheless, the reactions of Mr. Klein and the Attorney General, which may be taken for that of the President, suggest not only that Mr. Nixon is standing firm on his approach to Vietnam, which was to be expected; they suggest also that the Administration will persist in trying to discredit and deny the importance of the opposition to that approach. Like King Canute and Lyndon Johnson, it will try to command the waves to cease.

But if the President continues to make policy on the pretense that the protest movement is not serious, he will be basing that policy on an unreality.

No Time for Delusion

Take, for instance, the empty debater's argument that a President cannot make decisions under the pressures of a street mob; of course he can't, but no one expected Mr. Nixon to take a look out the window on Saturday, then call Hanoi. What he might be expected to do is to stop deluding himself that there is enough unity in this country to permit, without seri-

ous political and social disruption, the long, dubious process of "Vietnamization."

The Administration also asserts that peace demonstrations encourage Hanoi to hold out. But not only does the evidence suggest that Hanoi—certainly the N.L.F.—will hold out anyway; surely it is unrealistic for Mr. Nixon to expect the peace movement, with its origins and experience, to swallow its moral objections to the war and its political doubts about his policies so that he can move unhurriedly toward a faraway and ill-defined end. It is the most frightening of his difficulties that so many Americans no longer trust their leaders that much.

The point the Nixon Administration seems to miss, as its predecessor did, is that the main cost of the war is in America itself—the alienation of the young as well as more and more of their elders from a political system that appears ineffective and a Government that seems unresponsive—and it is far too great for any interest that might conceivably be pursued in Vietnam. That Mr. Nixon cannot see this is why he could not see the mobilization for what it was.